

Submission to the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs – Strengthening the Software and Humanware for Culture and the Arts

The Ink Society applauds the multi-faceted approach by the Home Affairs Bureau in the development of cultural software through its funding support of a wide variety of cultural groups, exchange activities, and cultural programmes. These worthwhile activities all serve to provide a rich fabric of cultural life in Hong Kong and demonstrate the government's serious commitment towards cultural development.

Arts Programmes in Schools

An even more fundamental approach to the development of human potential, however, would be to invest in the long-term development of arts curriculum in the schools from the earliest stages onward. By placing a greater emphasis on arts, music and theatre programmes in primary, secondary schools and universities, we would be ensuring that our cultural institutions will have the necessary pool of talent and human resources in the future. The Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, for example, which currently relies heavily on overseas musicians to fill its ranks, might in future find sufficient talent locally to make up a full orchestra.

A strong arts curriculum in the schools, both in visual and performing arts, will not only help build future talent in the arts, but foster creativity and imagination, which will have a long-term positive influence in the lives of the students. The creative process is an essential component of self-discovery and self-expression, with a long-term benefit that will help the young not only to develop artistic potential, but to live life more creatively and face its challenges with greater resilience. Theatre has also proven to be an extremely effective way to develop self-confidence, public speaking skills and an understanding of others through role-playing.

Thus, in our view, the development of cultural software would not be complete without the development of a comprehensive arts curriculum in the schools. This

will also ultimately have the effect of cultivating a wider audience which will actively attend and participate in the cultural life of our city.

Community Outreach Programmes

There are some communities in Hong Kong which lack all types of positive after-school activities for the young, from sports to arts and theatre. Moreover, residents in these communities do not have the means to travel outside of their district to attend or participate in cultural activities, and are not likely to benefit from events either in Tsimshatsui, West Kowloon or Hong Kong Island.

A possible solution to the lack of programmes and facilities in these areas is to first set up a basic venue where these programmes can take place, then introduce programmes through local volunteer arts groups and theatre companies. The Chung Ying Theatre company has proven very successful at organizing theatre workshops involving students, with past performances held in Tin Shui Wai, which received high praise and warm support from all concerned, especially parents and teachers. With better support and funding, the Chung Ying Theatre and other similar groups would be able to expand their programmes to other communities where the need for them is greatest.

Conclusion

The strengthening of software and humanware for culture and the arts will ultimately have a far-reaching effect in society, but will need to be built from the basics upward. The Ink Society strongly supports the establishment of strong arts curriculum in the schools at all levels, in the training of teachers for this purpose, and the establishment of a network of community outreach programmes. We strongly support a review of the current school curriculum by the Education Department towards this goal.

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